

Passage of Trade Agreements Will Help Wheat Farmers

June 23, 2010

I traveled to Colombia in April of 2008 to see our U.S.-Colombia partnership at work. Colombia has overcome many, many challenges and more remain, and it's essential that the United States continue a positive relationship with this critical ally in South America.

While it's good we're here today to discuss and pass this nonbinding resolution in support of Colombia, the better way to show our support for the Colombian people is to approve a still pending--4 years now--trade agreement. It has been nearly 4 years since the FTA, the free trade agreement, was signed, and yet Congress has failed to act. The longer we wait to approve the free trade agreement, the more we alienate this important ally and harm the American economy.

Currently, over 90 percent of Colombian goods enter our country duty free, but U.S. goods, including wheat and other agriculture commodities, are assessed at significant tariffs upon their entry to Colombia. If the Colombian Free Trade Agreement was approved, duties on U.S. wheat would immediately be eliminated, creating new opportunities for wheat exports.

It's harvest time in Kansas, and new market access is critical for Kansas wheat farmers who are encountering growing wheat supplies and declining prices. Unable to move wheat on the world market, grain elevators are dropping cash prices paid to our local farmers.

I support this resolution, but it is not a substitute for what we ought to be doing, approving the U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement.